

GROWING
Johannesteijsmannia altifrons
IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Ernesto Rodriguez

Johannesteijsmannia altifrons is found in Sumatra, peninsular Malaysia, southern Thailand, and western Borneo. It grows in mountainous rain forest on ridge tops and slopes from near sea-level to about 3000 feet altitude. The epithet is Latin for "tall frond" and the centermost leaf can reach as high as 20 feet. The species is commonly referred to as the diamond joey.

The palm has a creeping, subterranean trunk and a cluster of up to thirty leaves which form an impressive erect tussock. The petioles are 6-10 feet long and are armed with sawlike teeth. The diamond-shaped blades are prominently ribbed and with coarsely toothed margins and can be 10 feet long in older plants and 6 feet wide at their broadest points.

The white flowers have a sour smell and a corky fruit that is brown when ripe. Fresh seed takes about three months to germinate but may be erratic. Seedlings are slow growing and must be given ample room to develop since the radicle buries about 4-5 inches deep in the soil before the first leaf is formed. Each fruit can contain up to three seeds.

Plants are generally best suited to the tropics but are proving to be adaptable and success has been achieved in the subtropics. They require a sheltered position protected from excess sun and wind. Well-drained, loamy soils rich in organic matter, mulches and regular watering are useful for these lovely palms. Plants are very sensitive to root disturbance; be extremely careful when potting up, or planting out. They are easily killed by careless handling. Can be kept as a striking indoor plant but does require a lot of light and humidity.



Johannesteijsmannia altifrons in Singapore
Photo by: Palmpedia



Johannesteijsmannia altifrons ripe fruit and seed
Photo by: Dan Andersen



Right:
Johannesteijsmannia altifrons flower
detail
Photo by: Dr. Anni Sloth

Left:
Johannesteijsmannia altifrons
October featured auction plant
Photo by: Ernesto Rodriguez

